



**INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**THE  
RUSSIAN MILITARY'S  
ROLE IN POLITICS**

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**JAMES H. BRUSSTAR  
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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

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***A popular Government,  
without popular information or the means of  
acquiring it,  
is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or  
perhaps both.  
Knowledge will forever govern ignorance;  
And a people who mean to be their own  
Governors,  
must arm themselves with the power which  
knowledge gives.***

**JAMES MADISON to W. T. BARRY  
August 4, 1822**

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# **THE RUSSIAN MILITARY'S ROLE IN POLITICS**

**JAMES H. BRUSSTAR  
ELLEN JONES**

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One of the most crucial challenges that democratizing states face is that of redefining civil-military relations and transforming the military into a force loyal to the new democratic system.<sup>1</sup> In order to prevent the military from becoming a threat, democratizing governments must re-educate their military professionals and instill in them a sense of respect for democratic institutions and the multi-party system. The goal is to limit the military's role in politics and develop a tradition of an apolitical army.

The problems facing Russia in this regard are multi-fold. It inherited from the USSR an officer corps for which loyalty to both the Soviet Union and the ruling Communist party was a prerequisite to professional advancement. Although civilian control over the military was strong, the top political leadership shared with the military elite a high respect for military power and hence accorded military programs and Armed Forces' needs a high priority. The Soviet Armed Forces were, in effect, the favorite son of the command economy.

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The military lost its privileged status with the advent of Gorbachev. The old, familiar bureaucratic decisionmaking process was replaced by semi-democratic institutions far less congenial to military interests. In December 1991, the Soviet Union itself disappeared and with it, the unified army. These changes led to downsizing and reduced funding for today's Russian military—developments which have traumatized and angered the once-pampered officer corps.

This paper is an analysis of how the military has reacted to these events. In it, we examine the military's record over the past five years: its words, deeds, and attitudes in response to the political, economic, and social changes that have transformed the region. We have chosen to focus on one particular aspect of these transformations—one that has proven to be especially threatening to the military: the disintegrative trend that eventually overtook the Soviet Union, led to the demise of the unified Soviet Armed Forces, and continues to threaten the integrity of Russia as well. As part of this focus, we assess the military's actions during three critical events: the abortive August 1991 coup, the Belovezh agreement formalizing the demise of the USSR, and the fall 1993 political crisis in Moscow.

There are two major difficulties in this approach. The first is that the military (defined here as uniformed professionals in the Defense Ministry) is by no means a unitary actor; the events described below polarized both the officer corps and the top Defense Ministry leadership, leaving the military (like many other Soviet and later Russian institutions) deeply divided. Conclusions about the military's role must, therefore, be tempered with an awareness of these divisions.



The second difficulty is that of defining what is meant by "participation" in a political event or "intervention" in politics. In this paper, we make a distinction between involvement in political decisionmaking (such as the Defense Ministry's efforts to lobby for retaining a centralized union and single military in the late eighties) and direct participation by military figures in a political event (such as the August 1991 coup).

We also make a distinction between those military participants who actively planned and coordinated events (such as Defense Minister Yazov in the 1991 coup conspiracy) and those who complied with orders. A third distinction is between participation by top military leaders in a political struggle (e.g., the high command acting as power broker in a succession crisis) and the actual use of military forces.

Finally, we make a distinction between deployment of military units (such as the 19 August 1991 order sending thousands of Defense Ministry forces into Moscow) and employment (such as the 4 October assault by Defense Ministry tanks on the old parliament building). We reserve the term military "intervention" for those instances when one or more top military leaders become actively involved in planning or coordinating an illegal overthrow of legitimate political authorities or when military forces are actually employed on one side of a political struggle or to quell civil unrest consequent to a political crisis.

To anticipate an argument that will be laid out at greater length below, our conclusion is that Russia has made only limited progress toward creating an apolitical military and setting up institutional safeguards to prevent the use of coercive force by political leaders intent on gaining or maintaining power. The Russian Armed Forces remain, in essence, the old Soviet Armed Forces—an

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institution traumatized by the breakup of the USSR and co-existing uneasily with the new political order.

The military, however, has proven a very unwilling and largely ineffective political player. The high command has functioned as an aggressive, but not very competent, lobby to protect its institutional interests and to promote the integrity of first the Soviet and now the Russian state, often behaving in ways that go far beyond the bounds of acceptable military activity in stable democracies. When it has come to the actual employment of military force, however, the army has intervened only when key elements in the the high command have seen a direct, immediate threat to the stability of the state.

#### **THE MILITARY'S RESPONSE TO THE USSR'S CENTER-PERIPHERY CRISIS**

The demise of the USSR was the result of political changes initiated by Gorbachev in the late 1980s. Gorbachev's reforms destroyed the basis for center-periphery relations in the Soviet state. He jettisoned the "stagnation era" nationality policy (which promoted adaptation to the Soviet system with a repressive apparatus to control dissent) without replacing it with one of his own. By destroying the Communist Party apparatus, he removed the bureaucratic glue holding together regions of diverse cultural and linguistic background. Moreover, his attempts to replace the Party-dominated political system by one based on democratically-elected legislatures created a power vacuum at the top echelons that encouraged long-quiescent republic leaders to demand a greater role in policymaking.

These developments were profoundly threatening to the Soviet Defense Ministry. First, the loosening of central

controls resulted in major incidents of civil unrest on the Soviet periphery, which the Defense Ministry was called upon to quell. Military forces were used to supplement internal troops to quell domestic strife. This new domestic mission was highly distasteful to military leaders, who saw it as a no-win proposition for the Defense Ministry, pointing to the public outrage after troops forcibly broke up an April 1989 rally in Tbilisi, leaving twenty dead.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the Defense Ministry's distaste for these missions, however, there is no evidence that it refused to employ forces in a crisis. One explanation for this is that, in all of these events, political leaders argued that there was an immediate threat to civil order. However, the strong public condemnation of the military's actions in some instances (like the Tbilisi case) probably strengthened the arguments of those within the Defense Ministry who opposed the military's internal control role.

In any event, it was not the immediate threat of civil unrest but the longer-term threat of republic challenges to the center that was to constitute the greatest danger to the centrally controlled Armed Forces. The challenges to central Soviet rule began in 1987, with the Baltic states leading the way. Latvia declared sovereignty in October 1988, with Estonia following suit a month later. Lithuania issued a sovereignty declaration in May 1989, Azerbaydzhan in September 1989. Popular front organizations, like RUKh in Ukraine, became active in several republics in 1989, demanding a larger republic role in policymaking. Most other republics followed the Baltic example with their own sovereignty declarations in 1990.<sup>3</sup>

The first center-periphery skirmishes over military issues were over control of conscripts. The Soviet Defense Ministry had for several decades pursued a distant stationing policy—disbursing draftees from each republic

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(and the provinces within the Russian republic) to units in other parts of the Soviet Union. This strategy was designed partly to achieve an ethnic mix within units and partly to preclude development of close ties between locally-deployed units and the local populace. The policy was, however, very unpopular with the draftees and their families and almost immediately became a target for politicians pressing for more republic autonomy. During Defense Minister Yazov's confirmation hearings in July 1989, legislators from Georgia, Moldavia, and the Baltic republics protested the Defense Ministry's distant stationing policy, demanding that their draftees be allowed to serve in their home territory.<sup>4</sup>

Several republics began adopting legislation formalizing these claims. Estonia led the way in December 1989 with a resolution asserting the right of Estonian citizens to serve only within the republic. Other republics followed suit in 1990. The Ukrainian legislature, for instance, adopted a resolution on 30 July 1990 asserting that Ukrainian soldiers could not be sent outside the republic to areas of interethnic conflict. Russia adopted a similar measure on 24 September 1990.

Republic and local authorities also stopped cooperating with the Defense Ministry's conscription system. The Defense Ministry relied on a network of military commissariats to register, screen, and process conscripts; these organizations were part of the local government system and were staffed primarily by local residents. As the centralized Communist Party hierarchy crumbled, so too did central control over the manpower acquisition system. With local authorities encouraging draft resistance, draft evasion skyrocketed, particularly in the Caucasus, Baltic republics, and western Ukraine. In Georgia, for instance, draft compliance plummeted from

94% in the spring 1989 draft, to 11% in the fall of 1990.

The "republicanization" of the Soviet Armed Forces escalated in 1990, when several republics suspended conscription on their territories. Estonia ended its participation in the all-union draft on April 1990; Lithuania freed its citizens from the obligation to serve in the USSR Armed Forces in August 1990. Armenia suspended the draft on 3 May 1990; and Moldova took a similar step on 4 September 1990.

Several of the most independence-minded republics also began taking steps to set up their own militaries. The Georgian legislature, for instance, adopted a law on 20 December 1990 setting up a national guard; in January 1991, the legislature also adopted a resolution establishing obligatory military service. In the Baltic, popular front activists stepped up pressure on Soviet military installations, declaring that the units on Baltic soil were an occupying army.

The practical impact of these developments was at first limited, because those republics in the forefront (the Caucasus and Baltic republics) were small and the manpower resources to which they were laying claim did not represent a large chunk of the overall draft pool. The Georgian republic, for instance, represented only 2% of the Soviet draft-age pool in 1991.

The military leadership, however, saw these trends (correctly, as it turned out) as the thin edge of the wedge—the early signals of a development that could lead if unchecked to the end of the multinational Soviet Armed Forces. By early 1989, Defence Minister Yazov had become concerned that delegating military authority to the republics would lead to the eventual breakup of the country.<sup>5</sup> By early 1990, he voiced this concern publicly. In February, he used an Army Day interview in *Pravda* to

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denounce popular front activists in the Baltic republics, Moldavia, and the Caucasus who were agitating against Soviet military forces and encouraging young men to avoid service in the all-union army.<sup>6</sup> Yazov warned that these developments would "wreck" the draft.<sup>7</sup> He condemned nationalist efforts to create national armies as a "retrograde step liable to destroy the Army's combat readiness and the country's defense capability."<sup>8</sup> The rest of the military leadership reportedly shared Yazov's apprehensions and, in fact, were even more conservative on this issue than the Defense Minister.<sup>9</sup>

By the fall of 1990, the high command's concern had deepened to alarm. Military leaders were not just concerned over the impact of republic sovereignty on armed forces manpower. In their view, what was at stake in the struggle between the republics and the center was no less than the union itself and the unified army.<sup>10</sup>

At the base of the military leadership's alarm was its discontent with the way the political leadership was reacting to the escalating challenges to central authority. Gorbachev's initial response to nationalist demands and disorder on the Soviet periphery was an ineffective combination of concession and repression. In his dealings with the secession-minded Baltic republics, for instance, he lurched from economic sanctions and threats to negotiations and concessions.

Many in the military establishment, by contrast, were urging harsher measures. During this period, Yazov and other members of the high command repeatedly warned the political leadership of possible implications of these centrifugal trends for the Armed Forces; Gorbachev, it seems, largely ignored their reports and refused to act on their recommendations.<sup>11</sup>

Some members of the high command took their case to the public. In December 1990, for instance, Chief of the General Staff Mikhail Moiseyev, Deputy Defense Minister Valentin Varennikov, and Commander in Chief of the Navy Chernavin added their names to a public letter urging Gorbachev to use his presidential powers to restore stability and halt republic separatism.<sup>12</sup> Servicemen serving in the Baltic met in Riga on 21 December 1990 to demand that the Soviet legislature introduce presidential rule in the Baltic region.<sup>13</sup>

## **THE MILITARY AND THE UNION TREATY**

The high command was also to lose faith in Gorbachev's main strategy for defusing republic separatism: the union treaty. At first, the military leadership supported the strategy because it promised to create a new framework for center-periphery relations, satisfying republic demands for more input into policymaking without sacrificing the center's control over key decisions affecting military and foreign policy. Indeed, the initial version of the treaty (published in November 1990, at a time when Gorbachev was trying to placate traditionalists) envisioned a centralized state with limited powersharing between the center and republics on issues such as economic and social policy. However, the center would retain taxation authority and control over natural resources; and (more importantly for the high command) the initial draft also denied republics any role in such areas as defense and foreign policy.<sup>14</sup>

These provisions did not satisfy even the more moderate republics and did nothing to placate the man who was emerging as Gorbachev's most serious threat: Russian leader Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev reluctantly acceded to

several more republic demands; and a new version of the treaty was published in March 1991. However, the March draft continued to deny the republics a role in determining the military budget. Nor did it resolve the conflict between the center's insistence on a single, centralized military and the demands by some republics for military organizations of their own. However, it did give some ground on the contentious issue of republic participation in national security, authorizing the republics a role in resolving questions associated with stationing and draft procedures.

Although conservative elements within the officer corps may have opposed these latter provisions, Defense Ministry leaders still supported the union treaty process and the referendum Gorbachev scheduled for 17 March to consolidate support for the treaty. The referendum asked voters whether they advocated preserving the Soviet Union "as a renewed federation of sovereign republics."<sup>15</sup> The day before the poll, the Defense Ministry daily *Krasnaya zvezda* published an appeal from Defense Minister Yazov, urging servicemen to vote "yes" to a renewed union. He pointedly reminded his subordinates that "our motherland's freedom and independence are inseparably linked with the unity of its peoples. . . . While Rus was fragmented into appanage principalities, aggressors mercilessly tore it to pieces." Saying "yes" in the referendum, he concluded, meant that the unified Armed Forces would be preserved.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of voter response, the referendum on preserving the USSR was a stunning success. 80% of eligible voters in the nine participating republics came to the polls; and 76% of participating voters endorsed the "renewed federation." Support for preserving the USSR was highest in the Central Asian republics (98% of Turkmen voters, for instance, voted "yes") and lowest in the Slavic republics (71% of voters in the RSFSR voted "yes").



Yazov's appeal for a "yes" vote in the military also seems to have borne fruit. The "yes" vote in military precincts was 90%.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of mobilizing support for the union treaty, however, the referendum was an absolute failure. Consequently, Gorbachev—faced with a slumping economy—abruptly decided to renew the political alliance with reformers that he had abandoned the previous fall. This meant real concessions to republic leaders, particularly to Yeltsin. That decision placed Gorbachev—and the union treaty—on a collision course with hardliners.

The most outspoken of those opposing Gorbachev's concessions to the republics was the Soyuz group of deputies in the USSR legislature. Soyuz rejected Gorbachev's concessions on the grounds that they ceded too much power to the republics and would amount to an actual abolition of the single union state. Instead, Soyuz proposed a nationwide state of emergency and reimposition of the centralized command economy to counter republic separatism.<sup>18</sup>

Soyuz attracted a strong military following. Indeed, some of the most prominent spokesmen within Soyuz were military officers. An example is Colonel Viktor Alksnis, an ethnic Latvian and intransigent hardliner who favored measures to reinstate order and crush republic separatism.<sup>19</sup>

Alksnis joined with another military member of Soyuz—Lt Col Nikolay Petrushenko—in an April letter blasting republic separatists and Gorbachev, whom they accused of embarking on a course that would leave to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup>

Top military leaders, for their part, while distancing themselves from the extremist officers in Soyuz, were clearly just as uncomfortable with Gorbachev's renewed alliance with reformers and his growing acquiescence to

republic autonomy demands.<sup>21</sup> Ground forces commander Valentin Varennikov, for instance, made it clear in an interview in late March that only the direct participation of the Defense Minister and General Staff in the union treaty process would ensure that defense issues were resolved properly—that is, that the unified military would be preserved.<sup>22</sup> In July, Varennikov joined with Boris Gromov (a ground forces commander then serving as first deputy chief of the Internal Ministry) and other conservative, pro-union forces to issue a "Word to the People," calling on all patriotic forces "to halt the chain reaction of the ruinous disintegration of the state."<sup>23</sup>

Some elements within the officer corps, however, were coming to precisely the opposite conclusion: that the future was with the republics, not the center. These officers became active in republic politics. The prominence of military candidates in the June 1991 Russian presidential elections is a case in point.<sup>24</sup> Other officers became active in republic legislatures; some of these allied themselves with reformist political groups.

By the late summer of 1991, then, the military was deeply divided. Military elements on both ends of the political spectrum became more active participants in politics, with the Defense Ministry leaders aggressively lobbying to preserve the centralized union and single, multinational Armed Forces. However, military intervention during this period was limited to the employment of military forces in response to orders by the political leadership to restore civil order in secession-minded republics or those regions where the erosion of central control had prompted interethnic violence.

## THE MILITARY AND THE AUGUST 1991 COUP

The August 1991 coup represents a watershed event, both for the fate of the USSR (which the coup conspirators were trying to save) and for the military's role in politics. The top military leader—Defense Minister Yazov—became involved in a conspiracy to remove the legitimate political leader. It appears that the ringleader of the eight-man State Committee for State Emergencies (of which Yazov was a member) was KGB chief Kryuchkov.<sup>25</sup> Yazov's primary motive for joining Kryuchkov (according to both Yazov himself and his associates) was to pre-empt the planned 20 August signing of a new version of the union treaty—an event Yazov viewed as tantamount to the "breakdown of the union."<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the coup, the Defense Ministry attempted to portray the coup attempt as one in which Yazov and a few isolated conspirators acted essentially alone, without support from Defense Ministry officials. Many in the military leadership attempted to distance themselves from the coup after it failed.<sup>27</sup> Others have depicted themselves as active opponents of the coup and heroes of the White House.

It is clear, however, that the Yazov was by no means the only military supporter of the coup conspiracy. Several other top members of the military command—including Deputy Defense Minister and ground forces commander Varennikov and Deputy Defense Minister Achalov—were actively involved in the coup conspiracy.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, the list of coup planners also includes Pavel Grachev, the current Russian Defense Minister, then head of the airborne forces. Grachev testified that he participated with a group of KGB officials in a pre-coup planning session on 5 August 1991 (two

weeks before the coup) and another session on August 16. The latter session produced a list of measures to introduce a state of emergency.<sup>29</sup>

Other military commanders supported the State Committee for State Emergency (GKChP) after it seized power on 19 August.<sup>30</sup> Still others, like Leningrad Military District Commander Samsonov, vacillated.<sup>31</sup> Samsonov initially spearheaded measures to implement GKChP orders, appearing on local TV and radio to announce a state of emergency and restrictions on the media.<sup>32</sup> However, by the early hours of August 21, when it became clear that the coup was failing, Samsonov had adopted a neutral position.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, virtually all of the toplevel commanders complied with GKChP orders.<sup>34</sup> For instance, on 0800 on 18 August (the day before the emergency was announced), Yazov called a meeting of the high command to inform them about the state of emergency and outline their missions, in terms of securing key installations and maintaining civic order. There is no evidence that any of the generals present refused his orders.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, when Yazov issued an order early the following morning to bring troops into Moscow, "the order was fulfilled with military accuracy."<sup>36</sup> Tanks from the Taman motorized rifle division and Kantemir tank division began rolling into Moscow.<sup>37</sup>

Nor does there appear to have been any dissent at mid-day on the 20th (the day after the emergency was announced), when Achalov met with airborne commander Pavel Grachev (now Russian Defense Minister), MVD first deputy Boris Gromov (now Russian Deputy Defense Minister), and key KGB officials to craft a plan to attack the Russian White House.<sup>38</sup> Grachev himself later testified that he thought the operation a "dubious idea," but "I kept my opinion to myself."<sup>39</sup> Gromov confirms this account:

"Not one of (the meeting) participants refused to perform the task assigned to him. . . ."<sup>40</sup>

To be sure, some top level commanders had strong reservations about the entire operation.<sup>41</sup> Several—including Air Force chief Shaposhnikov and airborne troops commander Grachev—began their own private negotiations with Yeltsin and the White House defenders, promising to defy orders in the event Yazov ordered an assault on the White House.<sup>42</sup> Shaposhnikov later claimed that he was planning an air assault on the Kremlin if such orders were forthcoming.

In the end, however, such heroics were unnecessary. On the night of 20/21 August, Yazov—upon hearing a report from Deputy Defense Minister Achalov on the size of the crowds defending the White House—heeded the advice of Shaposhnikov and ordered the troops to halt. The following morning, Yazov called Kryuchkov to tell him he was "withdrawing from these games," then convened a meeting of the Defense Ministry Collegium that adopted a decision to withdraw the troops from Moscow.<sup>43</sup> The coup was over.<sup>44</sup>

As this account makes clear, the military did not mutiny and join Yeltsin's efforts to thwart the coup.<sup>45</sup> The White House defenders of August 1991 (like the White House defenders of September/October 1993) issued statements during the coup claiming that various forces had rallied to their side. In fact, however, only a few troops went over to Yeltsin's side.<sup>46</sup> It was the appearance of large-scale crowds around the White House and the threat they posed of major bloodshed and possibly even civil war in the event of an assault on the White House—not military defections to Yeltsin's side—that deterred Yazov from issuing the order to advance.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear, however, that most military leaders (even Yazov himself) were highly reluctant to support the conspiracy. Military commanders at all levels were willing to deploy forces, but balked when it came to employing them against those resisting the coup. It was this reluctance to employ military force to back the coup conspirators that doomed the coup.

## **THE MILITARY AND THE DEMISE OF THE USSR**

The military's reluctance to intervene in political developments, even those it strongly opposed, was demonstrated again in the months that followed the coup. Although the Defense Ministry emerged surprisingly unscathed by the coup, the slow-motion demise of the old center set the military adrift.<sup>48</sup> Still clinging desperately to the hope that the unified Soviet Armed Forces could somehow be preserved, military leaders returned to their pre-coup tactic of lobbying.<sup>49</sup>

The high command's hopes that the union could be preserved were in vain. The renewed union treaty talks quickly deadlocked. Gorbachev's last-ditch efforts to save the union were futile in the face of Ukraine's escalating insistence on independence and Yeltsin's growing conviction that the way to power was through the demise of the old central government. In early December, Yeltsin, Ukrainian leader Kravchuk, and Belarussian leader Shushkevich met at Belovezh Forest to sign an agreement formalizing the demise of the USSR and creating in its place a Commonwealth. The Soviet era was over.

The Belovezh Forest agreements created another major dilemma for the high command. Should they back Gorbachev or shift their support to the newly-created

Commonwealth?<sup>50</sup> In the end, Defense Ministry leaders decided to abandon the old Soviet central government, in part because the center had lost control of financial resources, making the military dependent on the three Slavic republics for support, and in part because the Commonwealth agreement envisioned retention of a unified military and unified control over nuclear weapons.<sup>51</sup> In short, although many within the military saw the Belovezh agreement as a betrayal, the military leadership and the officer corps eventually accepted the Commonwealth because they saw it as the nucleus of a new (and perhaps more viable) center.<sup>52</sup>

The high command's hopes for the Commonwealth, however, were frustrated by Ukraine, which steadfastly refused any involvement in a Commonwealth defense arrangement involving either a single armed forces or Commonwealth control of national forces. Determined to disengage from its former partners, Ukraine began in early January 1992 to nationalize troops on its soil, including assets—such as the Black Sea Fleet—that both Russia and newly appointed Commonwealth Commander Shaposhnikov claimed as Commonwealth forces. Ukrainian Defense Minister Morozov ordered a cessation of direct communications between troops units located in Ukraine and the General Staff in Moscow.<sup>53</sup> Kiev also announced that military personnel in "non-strategic" units on Ukrainian territory would be obliged to sign a new oath of allegiance to Ukraine.

These developments were profoundly disturbing to the officer corps, which still clung to the hope that a unified military could be preserved.<sup>54</sup> A poll taken at a meeting of officers' representatives in Moscow on 17 January 1992 revealed that 71% of the assembly participants favored restoration of the old USSR. Support for the idea of

restoring the USSR was strongest among senior officers and less strong among those with fewer years in service. Moreover, 79% of the assembly participants felt that the military should have the deciding say in determining the future of the armed forces; only 19% felt that the army must await decisions by politicians on the army's future.<sup>55</sup> A follow-on June 1992 poll of participants in an expanded meeting of the Coordinating Council for officer's assemblies found that nearly all thought that the situation in the military had significantly worsened since the beginning of the year; respondents also reported that the Armed Forces was becoming increasingly politicized during this period.<sup>56</sup>

Yet the military, for all its opposition to the demise of the USSR and the breakup of the unified military, refrained from intervening in these processes. There is no evidence that the high command or lower-level commanders were actively planning measures to counter the USSR's demise by force. Nor did they take steps to remove Yeltsin in the spring of 1992, when it became clear that he was acquiescing to the centrifugal forces that doomed the Commonwealth as a successor state to the USSR and ultimately doomed the unified military. In fact, many officers were probably greatly relieved in May 1992 when Yeltsin finally announced the creation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, in part because the decision clarified the military chain of command.<sup>57</sup>

## **THE MILITARY AND RUSSIA'S CENTER-PERIPHERY PROBLEMS**

In many ways, the Russian military faces the same dilemma with regard to Russia as the old Soviet military faced with



regard to the USSR. In both cases, unresolved center-periphery issues threaten the survival of the state.

Russia's center-periphery problems bear every similarity to those of the USSR. First, like the USSR, Russia is ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse. Second, as in the Soviet case, the demise of the Communist Party hierarchy removed a major centralizing institution; and no consensus on the division of authority between Moscow and the provinces has been worked out. Yeltsin also faces the same kind of power vacuum that frustrated Gorbachev. The levers of power are not working. Regional authorities frequently flout Moscow decrees. Finally, the economic problems that exacerbated Gorbachev's attempts to handle republic challenges have, if anything, intensified.

The pattern of provincial challenge and Moscow response has also been similar. In many cases, regional challengers to Russian authority have modelled their strategies after those of republic leaders who successfully defied Soviet rule. In 1990, many of Russia's autonomous republics (encouraged by Russia's own demands for a greater role in Soviet decisionmaking) adopted sovereignty declarations. As in the case of republic sovereignty declarations, most of these regional declarations demanded autonomy, not independence, calling for greater regional input into Russian decisionmaking and asserting provincial authority over local natural resources.<sup>58</sup>

After the abortive August 1991 coup, continued economic deterioration and political turmoil sharply aggravated the regional challenges facing Russia's leaders, radicalizing regional autonomy drives within Russia. Some of Russia's regions escalated their demands, shifting their goals from local autonomy and less interference in regional economic affairs to complete independence. As was the

case in republic resistance to Soviet rule, regional leaders used resistance to Russia as a rallying point to mobilize support.

Several areas have adopted another strategy borrowed from rebellious republic leaders: backing up their defiance of central authority by setting up their own military forces and declaring regional control over military assets within the region. Tatarstan recalled its citizens from areas of interethnic conflict in early 1993; it later adopted a measure on military service that was in direct conflict with federal military service legislation.<sup>59</sup> The Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples decided to set up its own army in early 1992; paramilitary forces who answered this call joined Abkhazia's war against Georgia.<sup>60</sup> In late 1992, North Ossetia adopted a decision (later annulled by the federal legislature in Moscow) to set up its own republic guard.<sup>61</sup> The Kabardino-Balkaria parliament announced the creation of a republican guard in early 1992. In late 1992, it recalled servicemen from its region who were serving in Armenia.<sup>62</sup>

The most successful provincial challenge to Moscow was in the Caucasus, where Chechnya successfully defied Moscow rule in the fall of 1991 when Russia—still part of the USSR—had neither internal troops nor military forces to stem a revolt. Chechnya, now boasting its own military forces, including a rudimentary air force, has been operating as an independent state ever since.<sup>63</sup>

The military's reaction to these developments has been much like its earlier reaction to analogous trends in the USSR. The army daily, *Krasnaya zvezda*, periodically runs editorials and articles arguing that provincial demands pose a huge threat to Russia's integrity and raise the possibility that the Russian Armed Forces may have to be partitioned province by province. "Have we really learned

nothing," lamented one editorial, "from the bitter lessons of the USSR's collapse?"<sup>64</sup>

The Defense Ministry's response to direct secession efforts and the breakdown of civil order on the periphery has also been similar to that of its Soviet progenitor. Defense Ministry forces have been employed to quell violence in several Caucasian provinces, much as Soviet forces were used in the now independent Caucasus republics. As with the Soviet Defense Ministry, there has been a great deal of military griping about the inappropriateness of these domestic missions, but no evidence that commanders or troops refused orders.

So far, Russia's center-periphery problems have proven far more manageable than those of the USSR. This is partly because the new Russian center has key demographic and political resources that the old USSR center did not. Russians in the old USSR represented barely half of the overall Soviet population and their loyalty to the old center was not clear-cut. Russians throughout the USSR, but particularly within the RSFSR, had a competing center of loyalty: the emerging Russian state. Identification with Russia as a political entity coincided with ethnic and linguistic sources of identification and acted as a powerful competing center of loyalty, diluting Russian support for continuation of the supra-national Soviet state. By contrast, Russians within the Russian Federation constitute a much larger portion of the populace (82%).<sup>65</sup> While there are some local and institutional claims on the loyalty of these Russians, none coincides with ethnic and linguistic identity.

Moreover, Yeltsin has been far less willing than Gorbachev to concede real power to the provinces. Despite periodic attempts (usually unsuccessful) to play the regional card against his opponents at the center, Yeltsin has been fairly rigid in his insistence on strong central authority. As

a result, the military has not been forced to choose between acquiescence to a political deal between center and provinces that would undermine the integrity of the state or direct intervention in the political process that might risk civil war.

### **THE MILITARY AND RUSSIA'S LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE STRUGGLE**

The most immediate threat to Russia's survival, however, is not the aspirations of its provinces for independence but the political turmoil generated by the center's attempts to move from authoritarianism to democracy. This attempt has been profoundly destabilizing for central authority, in part because Russia is trying to graft democratic institutions and processes onto a society that is still largely authoritarian. Although Russia experimented briefly with democratic institutions early this century, these experiences are too remote and too brief to have contributed much to the growth of democratic political culture. As a result, Russia's political environment has alternated between gridlock and crisis. Most of the crises have, up until now at least, been generated by conflict between executive and legislative authority.

The Russian high command has shown even less enthusiasm for involvement in these political struggles than its Soviet predecessor. When an angry Yeltsin challenged the legislature in December 1992, Defense Minister Grachev (a close Yeltsin crony) declined to support his boss. Similarly, when Yeltsin attempted to bypass the legislature in March 1993—and only narrowly escaped impeachment—Grachev, like KGB chief Barannikov and MVD chief Yerin, joined virtually all the rest of Yeltsin's

cabinet in proclaiming fealty to the Constitution Yeltsin was trying to overturn.

## **THE MILITARY AND THE FALL 1993 CRISIS**

Despite the Defense Ministry's attempts to stay out of political struggles, military forces became involved in Yeltsin's third (and ultimately successful) attempt at destroying the old legislature. Yeltsin, by his own testimony, decided to dissolve the parliament by early September and instructed Viktor Ilyushin, a top advisor, to draft the relevant decree.<sup>66</sup> Yeltsin used previously planned visits to the army's elite Taman and Kantemir divisions as opportunities to assess the probable military reaction to the decree. Although he told the officers nothing of his plans, "I saw unmistakably that they would support me in them."

Further assurances of military loyalty came on 12 September, when Yeltsin met with his "closest comrades"—Grachev, Internal Minister Yerin, acting Security Minister Golushko, and Foreign Minister Kozyrev—to inform them of his plans. According to Yeltsin, Grachev, convinced "that this Supreme Soviet should have been closed down long ago," had frequently tried to persuade Yeltsin to take a tougher stance. Grachev, along with the other participants in the meeting, supported Yeltsin's proposal to issue the decree on 19 September. On 15 September, Yeltsin briefed a session of the Security Council on his plans. All of the Council members, he recalls, supported his decision.

However, when Yeltsin met on 17 September to work out the final details of the plan, "Everything almost ground to a halt." Grachev, along with Yerin and Golushko, requested that the decree dissolving parliament

be postponed. Key leaders of the opposition, Vice President Rutskoy and parliamentary speaker Khasbulatov, had somehow gotten wind of Yeltsin's plans. Yeltsin agreed to a postponement, but only for two days.

Accordingly, on 21 September, Yeltsin issued a decree illegally dissolving the old parliament and calling for new legislative elections. This time, in contrast to March 1993, the Defense Ministry leadership (after several initial reports that the Chief of the General Staff, Kolesnikov, was working with Yeltsin's parliamentary opponents) expressed public support for the President.<sup>67</sup>

However, in the tense standoff that followed, with Vice President Rutskoy and the legislature holed up defiantly in the Russian White House, Defense Minister Grachev made it clear that the army would attempt to remain neutral. This decision reflected a strong consensus within the top Defense Ministry leadership. According to several accounts, the Defense Ministry Collegium convened for an emergency meeting on 22 September to decide whom the military would support in the conflict between the President and the Supreme Soviet. The Collegium resolved unanimously to observe complete neutrality. Grachev—despite his earlier assurances of military backing to Yeltsin—reportedly supported this decision.<sup>68</sup>

The Collegium's reluctance to involve itself in the crisis reflects the views of the officer corps at large. A survey of urban residents conducted on 25 September (after Yeltsin's decree outlawing parliament but before the 3/4 October showdown) found a solid majority (62%) wanted the military to stay out of the conflict. Opposition to military involvement on either side was strongest among the military servicemen in the sample: 80% said the military should stay out of the struggle altogether.<sup>69</sup>

It was only after riots broke out in Moscow on 3 October that Defense Ministry leaders agreed to employ Defense Ministry forces to attack the White House. While the evidence is incomplete and contradictory, it seems clear that virtually the entire high command, including Defense Minister Grachev, resisted Yeltsin's order to storm the White House.

Yeltsin's account of the night of 3-4 October indicates that he came very close to losing power.<sup>70</sup> Events began spiralling out of his control on the afternoon of 3 October, when demonstrators sympathetic to the parliament broke through police cordons surrounding the White House, then stormed the nearby mayor's office. By evening, rioters in commandeered vehicles were storming Ostankino (the government-owned and controlled television station).

Yeltsin, according to his own account, was informed of these events in his Barvikha residence by Mikhail Barsukhov, the chief of the Kremlin guards. Yeltsin called Grachev—the first of many increasingly frantic calls to the Defense Minister—and received assurances that army troops were on the way and would liberate Ostankino, now under siege by anti-Yeltsin forces.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, Ostankino chief Vyacheslav Bragin was also making calls for assistance to the three "power" ministries, but his desperate pleas for help went unheeded.<sup>72</sup> Yeltsin was becoming desperate:

I was receiving this information from many sources and realized that the country was truly hanging by a thread. . . . I was trying to bring my combat generals out of their state of stress and paralysis. The army, despite all the assurances of the Defense Minister, for some reason was not able to come quickly to Moscow's defense and fight the rebels.<sup>73</sup>

The situation at Ostankino continued to deteriorate, but Grachev (according to Yeltsin) responded to pleas for action by reporting that a Defense Ministry Collegium meeting was underway. Yeltsin ally Gaydar appeared on another television station, appealing to Moscow residents to take to the streets in support of their President. More alarming reports followed:

(At 2:30 AM) the fighting was continuing at Ostankino, right in the television station. The police, who had been told not to become involved in clashes, had withdrawn after the first one, leaving the city to be torn to pieces by armed bandits. Meanwhile, the army, numbering two and a half million people, could not produce even a thousand soldiers; not even one regiment could be found to come to Moscow and defend the city. To put it mildly, the picture was dismal.<sup>74</sup>

Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin had to go in person to Defense Ministry headquarters in an attempt to generate support for the White House assault, but (according to Yeltsin) met strong resistance:

Overall I must say that the generals' expressions were grim and guilty. They obviously understood the awkwardness of the situation: the lawful government hung by a thread but the army couldn't defend it—some soldiers were picking potatoes and others didn't feel like fighting. A discussion began about the taking of the White House. Everyone realized that the headquarters of the incitement of war must be isolated.



Chernomyrdin asked, "Are there any suggestions?" In answer there was only a heavy, morose silence.<sup>75</sup>

Even after military leaders acceded to a plan for storming the White House (proposed by one of the presidential guards officers), Grachev—apparently uncertain as to whether Yeltsin would prevail in the struggle—intervened to ask Yeltsin for specific orders to use tanks, an intervention that earned him a sharp rebuke by Chernomyrdin.<sup>76</sup>

There are several possible explanations for Grachev's reluctance to commit troops.<sup>77</sup> One explanation is that Grachev (and other members of the high command) were not sure Yeltsin would emerge victorious. This is the main justification for Gaydar's late night appeal on the night of 3/4 October for pro-Yeltsin demonstrators to take to the streets: the appeal was designed to demonstrate that Yeltsin had popular support in order to convince the military to take his side.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, it seems clear from Yeltsin's accounts (as well as other corroborating versions of the night's events) that Grachev was to some degree a captive of the other members of the Defense Ministry Collegium, some of whom harbored sympathy for Rutskoy and the conservative parliament. Although Grachev insisted that all Russian generals backed Yeltsin, his own version of events during the crisis raises serious questions about the allegiance of at least five top generals: Air Forces commander Petr Deynekin, Deputy Defense Minister Mironov, Chief of the General Staff Kolesnikov, Deputy Defense Minister Gromov, and Ground Forces Commander Semenov. Several sources have accused these generals of maintaining contact with anti-Yeltsin forces in the White House or

working to undermine Yeltsin's position during the crisis. Grachev acknowledged contacts between his top generals and the White House, but claimed that such contact had been authorized by him and were designed to defuse the crisis.<sup>79</sup>

The reluctance of the high command to employ Defense Ministry forces in the crisis also reflected very real uncertainty regarding the reliability of the forces themselves.<sup>80</sup> As in the August 1991 coup, there were numerous reports of military units defecting to the side of the embattled parliament.<sup>81</sup> As in August 1991, however, most of these reports were fallacious; instances of direct defection to those resisting the coup were limited. Even Grachev (who tried to minimize military defections) conceded that most of the military servicemen who were working as deputies in the outlawed Supreme Soviet joined the anti-Yeltsin resistance and refused to comply with orders to return to their units. Grachev also noted that about two dozen individual officers joined the White House defenders.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, again according to Grachev, there were two group defections. In one instance, the colonel in command of an air defense and missile regiment near Podolsk succeeded in persuading eighteen of his subordinates to come with him to defend the White House. They were arrested on their way. The second incident occurred in Noginsk, where a deputy company commander organized 18 conscripts and set out for Moscow in a truck. This group was detained 31 kilometers from the city.<sup>83</sup>

If actual defections to the side of the outlawed legislature were few, however, resistance to the order to deploy to Moscow appears to have been widespread. Presidential advisor and retired general Dmitriy Volkogonov, who checked out claims by Rutskoy and

Khasbulatov that the troops were rallying to their side, reports that "in the overwhelming majority of cases it was White House bluff, but the danger was serious enough."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, there are reports that commanders of some of the elements of the Taman and Kantemirov divisions (the units that were ordered into Moscow on the evening of 3/4 October) did so only under protest. There are also indications that some highlevel commanders almost succeeded in pressuring Yeltsin to agree to a compromise with the outlawed legislature that would have allowed them to avoid bringing the troops into Moscow.<sup>85</sup>

In any event, none of these symptoms of military reluctance succeeded in thwarting the planned assault on the Russian White House. The attack was decisive, taking 150 Russian lives according to official reports and many more according to Yeltsin's critics. Rutskoy, Khasbulatov, and other leaders of the forces resisting Yeltsin's dissolution of parliament were arrested; Yeltsin declared several weeks of emergency rule in Moscow, imposed press censorship, and banned key opposition parties. The fall 1993 crisis was over; and Yeltsin, with the reluctant support of the Armed Forces, had won.

## **AFTERMATH OF THE OCTOBER CRISIS**

The Armed Forces' involvement in the 4 October tank assault on the White House traumatized the military. Survey data suggest that few Russians think that the crisis has resolved the political stalemate.<sup>86</sup> In fact, many feel that the crisis in governance has gotten worse, not better.<sup>87</sup> An increasing proportion say that it is time for Yeltsin to step down.<sup>88</sup> These sentiments were reflected in the results of the December 1993 parliamentary elections, when voters

turned a decisive thumbs-down to radical reformers closely associated with Yeltsin and the executive's attack on the legislature.

While military attitudes (in the absence of reliable survey data) cannot be stated with certainty, it seems clear that the officer corps was particularly embittered by the October events. In Grachev's words, "The military still feels bitterness because it was forced to help solve the problems created by political confrontation."<sup>89</sup> One indicator of this bitterness is the fact that some officers who took part in the tank attack on the White House have tried to conceal their role in the assault, reportedly because they fear violent retaliation.<sup>90</sup>

Another indirect indicator of the military's negative reaction to the October events was its voting pattern in the December 1993 legislative elections. The Armed Forces apparently voted more heavily for the opposition, especially for Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalists, than did the civilian population. Although most servicemen vote at civilian polling places and much of the military vote is thus buried in civilian totals, data from those electoral precincts with a high proportion of military voters suggest that conservative candidates were particularly popular with servicemen.<sup>91</sup>

Yeltsin estimated (apparently on the basis of these data) that Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalist party garnered a third of the military vote in the proportional race, compared to less than a quarter for the population as a whole.<sup>92</sup> However, according to chief of the Counterintelligence Service Sergey Stepashin, Zhirinovskiy captured 40 percent of the military vote. The figures provided to Yeltsin, he said, were "adjusted"—apparently downward—for the president, implying that more than 40% actually voted for Zhirinovskiy.<sup>93</sup> These figures tally with those provided by

a Russian journalist, who claims that within the officer corps, 40% voted for Zhirinovskiy. According to the journalist, this estimate was derived from voting patterns in closed military precincts, where officers voted in separate polling stations from conscript personnel.

Other reports suggest that Communist and other "Red-Brown" candidates also garnered a large proportion of the military vote. One government official claims that 50-80% of the army vote went to Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalists, the Communists, and other conservative groups.<sup>94</sup> Two disenchanted army colonels asserted that 67.8% of the vote in closed polling places on military garrisons went to Zhirinovskiy and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.<sup>95</sup>

Additional evidence of the military's attraction to Zhirinovskiy came from Vladimir Smirnov, Assistant Chief of the Analytical Center of the Presidential Administration. Smirnov asserted that analysis within the presidential apparatus of voting patterns at closed polling stations provided strong evidence of military support for Zhirinovskiy. He explained this development by arguing that educational work among military men was "national-socialist" in content.<sup>96</sup>

Zhirinovskiy's strong showing among servicemen in the election coincides with public opinion surveys on the socio-demographic makeup of Zhirinovskiy supporters. Such surveys indicate that the ultranationalist leader is particularly popular among military servicemen and among young males in general.<sup>97</sup> Further evidence of the military's attraction to Zhirinovskiy comes from a study by the Public Opinion Foundation (a reputable Moscow-based polling firm). Respondents in an 18 December survey were asked how they voted in the early December legislative elections.<sup>98</sup> The results indicate that military personnel

voted disproportionately for the Liberal Democratic Party. A subsequent study by the same firm also found that servicemen (and policemen) were more likely to support Zhirinovskiy for president.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, a late January poll among urban residents by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center found that army and law enforcement personnel were more likely to view Zhirinovskiy's statements in the State Duma as rational and appropriate.<sup>100</sup>

Part of Zhirinovskiy's appeal to military personnel was his success in exploiting two key issues: growing disorder and the loss of great power status. Survey data on voters' motives reveal that those who voted for both the LDP and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation did so because they saw these parties as being most likely to support the restoration of order in the country. Zhirinovskiy voters, in addition, saw the LDP as the group most capable of defending the interests of Russians in Russia and the near abroad. Zhirinovskiy voters were also more supportive than other voters of restoration of a centralized state within the boundaries of the old Soviet Union. Only 13% of Zhirinovskiy voters reported that they voted for the LDP because they saw this party as the main opposition to Yeltsin.<sup>101</sup>

These findings suggest that military alienation from the Yeltsin leadership is at least as strong as that of the civilian populace and perhaps—given the Defense Ministry's resentment of the role it was forced to play in resolving the crisis—much stronger. In sum, the events of 21 September–4 October almost certainly acted to reinforce the military's reluctance to come to Yeltsin's assistance in a future struggle.

After the October crisis, the military—in a pattern similar to its actions after the 1991 coup—reverted to its pre-crisis strategy of lobbying. The Defense Ministry, for

instance, emerged during the spring and summer battle over the 1994 budget as the most vocal institutional claimant on resources. Defense Ministry officials mounted an aggressive public campaign—through high-level statements and on the pages of its press organ, *Red Star*—to justify the military's resource demands. Despite early support from both Yeltsin and defense supporters in both houses of the legislature for a 55 trillion ruble defense budget, the Defense Ministry eventually lost the budget battle, when presidential, parliamentary, and government forces joined forces in support of a much lower figure.<sup>102</sup>

There were also signs in the aftermath of the October crisis that civilian control over the military had been seriously weakened. The most dramatic example of this was the curious saga of General Aleksandr Lebed. An airborne officer and reported early crony of Grachev, Lebed was appointed in June 1992 to head Russia's 14th Army in Dniester, where the dispute between Moldovan authorities and Slavic-speaking separatist forces had erupted into a civil war. Lebed quickly emerged as an outspoken advocate of Dniester autonomy and critic of the Moldovan government, but his repeated forays into regional politics earned him not a reprimand, but a promotion from Yeltsin.

Two years later, convinced he could act with impunity, Lebed issued a defiant political challenge to both Yeltsin and Grachev in a well-publicized 20 July 1994 interview in a major Moscow newspaper in which he characterized Yeltsin as "a minus" and endorsed the Pinochet model of military rule.<sup>103</sup> Moscow responded to Lebed's defiance by attempting to remove him from his command, but this brought a storm of protest from Lebed's officers, who sent Defense Minister Grachev a message demanding that Lebed be retained and the decision to disband the Army be reversed. Some officers reportedly

threatened mutiny if Lebed were removed from his post.<sup>104</sup>

In the face of this resistance, the Defense Ministry beat a hasty retreat, denying plans to fire Lebed. Yeltsin, for his part, praised the insubordinate general. Lebed, he said, played a "great role" in keeping the situation in Moldova under control and preventing largescale bloodshed.<sup>105</sup> Defense Minister Grachev also found it necessary to sing Lebed's praises, characterizing him as a "reliable helper" to whom he had offered the post of Tajikistan Defense Minister. However, after Lebed refused the offer, Grachev agreed that the rebellious commander would remain in Dniester or perhaps even replace Grachev as Defense Minister.<sup>106</sup>

Moscow's lack of resolve in dealing with Lebed and his officers demonstrates weak civilian control of the military and will likely embolden other officers to dabble in politics. The events also serve to legitimize the idea that Russian field commanders are less agents of the high command in Moscow than autonomous actors who represent the interests of the officers under their command.<sup>107</sup>

An ominous harbinger of continued military resistance to civilian control is the 11 August acquittal of former ground forces commander Valentin Varennikov for his role in the August 1991 coup. Varennikov, the only participant in the 1991 coup to reject the Duma's 23 February 1994 amnesty and to demand a trial to vindicate his actions—used the trial to publicize his view that the abortive coup was not an illegal attempt to overthrow the legitimate leadership, but rather a well-meaning attempt to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both the prosecutor and the court agreed with Varennikov's reasoning and acquitted him of treason charges.<sup>108</sup> By vindicating Varennikov's actions (and by implication those of other military coup participants), the ruling removes a



potential legal barrier against military intervention in politics.

## **HOW CAN THE MILITARY'S ROLE BE EXPLAINED?**

This review of the military's response to the tumultuous political events of the last five years suggests that Russia has yet to transform the old Soviet Armed Forces into an apolitical military. To the contrary, the Defense Ministry leadership has consistently acted as an autonomous actor in opposing any developments it perceives as threatening the integrity of the state, first the USSR and now Russia. The Defense Ministry has functioned as an institutional lobby backing a centralized system conducive to the retention of first the USSR Armed Forces and now the Russian Armed Forces. Moreover, political leaders have used Defense Ministry forces (albeit with great distaste by Defense Ministry leaders) in quelling civil disorder and separatist threats, first on the USSR's periphery and now on Russia's periphery.

In terms of its involvement in power struggles at the center, however, the military has proven to be a most reluctant participant. In the months leading up to the August 1991 coup, the officer corps and the high command were increasingly dismayed by the escalating threats to Soviet integrity and what they saw as the political leadership's ill-advised reaction to them. Both the Defense Ministry leadership and individual high-ranking officers actively lobbied in favor of retention of a centralized state and single army.

Few in the military high command, however, including Yazov himself, showed any enthusiasm for the conspiracy to oust Gorbachev and reverse the trends that

they so strongly opposed. There are several alternative (although not mutually exclusive) explanations for the Defense Ministry's actions (or lack thereof) during the coup.

One explanation is that it became clear by 20 August that the coup conspirators were totally inept. To come to the aid of such bumbling conspirators was to associate oneself and one's institution with sure failure. A second explanation is that the military had become so thoroughly depoliticized during the Soviet period that there was no tradition of military intervention in politics. A third explanation is that the Armed Forces was by August 1991 so disorganized and demoralized that the use of military units in any struggle risked military fragmentation. Fourth, there were deep political divisions within the officer corps and within the high command itself that undermined the Defense Ministry's cohesiveness.

The most compelling explanation, however, was that to support the coup conspiracy by assaulting the Russian White House would have risked widespread unrest and possibly civil war. This was seen by most in the high command as a greater threat to the survival of the USSR than the union treaty. It was this argument that motivated Yazov's order to withdraw the troops from Moscow.

The military's failure to react when the three Slavic states met in the Belovezh Forest and decided to abolish the Soviet Union can also be seen within this framework. One possible explanation is that, for many within the officer corps, there were viable alternatives to the Soviet military. Those stationed in Ukraine had the option of affiliating themselves with the emerging Ukrainian military. For those in stationed in Russia, the Russian Federation was an alternative source of identity.

The most persuasive explanation, however, is that the final breakup of the USSR was accomplished peacefully and without bloodshed. It is likely that at least some within the military leadership questioned the continued viability of the USSR and felt that it might be destabilizing to try to intervene in the process of its demise.

Similarly, the military's refusal to get involved in the Russian executive-legislative conflict prior to October 1993 is best explained as a reflection of the Defense Ministry's assessment that these conflicts posed no immediate threat of civil disorder. Lacking this threat, there was no consensus within the Defense Ministry leadership or within the officer corps at large on the need for Armed Forces intervention.

Military reluctance to intervene politically was also evident in October 1993, when it took major disorders in the capitol to induce a hesitant high command to answer the call of their Commander in Chief. Most accounts of the events in the critical hours preceding the attack on the White House indicate that Grachev's reluctance to commit Defense Ministry forces was not just a result of his own desire to keep his options open, but rather reflected a larger reluctance within the Defense Ministry Collegium and among lower level commanders to use force against the White House. Some of this reluctance may have stemmed from sympathies with Yeltsin's opponents, but much of it was due to a deeper aversion to military intervention in politics. It was only the breakdown of order in Moscow that convinced an unwilling high command to authorize the use of Defense Ministry forces in the assault on the White House. The primary motive was not to prop up Yeltsin, but to restore order and prevent the situation from spiraling into civil war.

In fact, the two coups in Russia's recent past—the hardliners' unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Gorbachev in August 1991 and Yeltsin's successful attempt to overthrow parliament in September/October 1993—are similar in several key respects. In both cases, the Minister of Defense (career military men) initially was clearly involved on the side of one of the participants. In 1991, Yazov was one of the coup leaders; in 1993, Grachev originally came out in clear support of President Yeltsin. In both cases, there were elements within the military that wanted to take political sides. However, in neither case did the military commanders aggressively seek to support the side that was claiming the mantle of savior of the state. In both instances, when faced with the possibility of internal fissures along politically partisan lines, the commanders of forces (as opposed to the ministers) resisted taking decisive action.

The most striking difference between the military's response in 1991 and 1993 can be traced to the riots in the streets of Moscow in October 1993. In August 1991, Yeltsin successfully mobilized a massive, but nonviolent, resistance to the coup conspirators. In October 1993, Rutskoy and other anti-Yeltsin leaders in the White House made the mistake of endorsing violence, thus presenting an immediate and unmistakable threat to the stability of the state.

## **THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN RUSSIA'S FUTURE**

This survey of the military's response to events over the last five years has implications for its likely role in future developments that may threaten Russia's survival. One key issue is what role the military will play in a future crisis.

Would the military intervene to prevent the disintegration of Russia? Or, conversely, is the military more likely to contribute to distringrative forces undermining Russian unity? Our analysis suggests that the Defense Ministry will remain an institution strongly committed to Russian unity and the retention of a relatively centralized state.

To be sure, there are indications (noted above) that regional commands are becoming more independent of the high command in Moscow. In the future, continued economic decline and turmoil at the center could make regional military commanders more dependent on provincial politicians. This development could conceivably undermine the chain of command and, in a crisis, could result in local commanders transferring their loyalty to regional leaders.

However, there are key factors that suggest the military will act primarily to support Russian unity, not undermine it. One key factor is that many in both the officer corps and the high command remain convinced that the breakup of the USSR was a tragic mistake that must not be repeated. There is, in fact, growing support within the officer corps and the polity at large for a restoration of some form of union, particularly with the other Slavic states. The military, then, is likely to be far more insistent on preventing Russia's breakup than they were two years ago in protecting the integrity of the USSR.

A second factor is that the increasing dependence of regional commanders on their civilian counterparts has not necessarily produced congenial relations. In some cases, provincial elites have strongly resisted the transfer of local resources (like housing) to the military; for these commanders, the primary loyalty will remain the centralized military command.

Finally (and most importantly), a continuation or deepening of the centrifugal trends affecting Russia is

almost certain to accelerate the breakdown of civil order. The fragmentation of Russia is unlikely to be as peaceful as the negotiated settlement that ended the USSR. It is unlikely, then, given the military's previous record, that the Defense Ministry will stand by passively if order breaks down. Indeed, the widespread violence that would likely accompany the fragmentation of Russia would probably generate a strong consensus, even within a deeply divided military, that the Armed Forces must be used to pre-empt this development. Indeed, as we argue below, the most likely form of provincial civil-military alliance is one in which a provincial coalition operates to restore strong central authority, not undermine it.

These considerations suggest that the Defense Ministry will continue to lobby aggressively on behalf of Russian unity. In addition, despite the officer corps' strong distaste for its newly-acquired internal control role, the Armed Forces will likely remain a key force for countering direct separatist challenges from Russia's provinces.

A second issue is what role the military will play in a future political crisis at the center. Our assessment suggests that the military would be extremely reluctant to initiate a political crisis by intervening unilaterally to oust a sitting president or resolve a legislative-executive conflict. Military leaders have apparently concluded that their involvement in political events, absent a clear threat to stability, has just as good a chance to speed on the onset of civil war (and provoke a dangerous split within the military itself) as it has to restore stability.

More likely than a crisis initiated by military action, then, is one produced by actions outside the military's control, placing the high command in a position where it has to choose between sides. One possibility in this regard is a succession struggle. Given the weakness of Russia's

democratic institutions, it is by no means certain that the future head of state will be chosen through constitutional means (i.e., through democratic elections). If the change of leadership takes place through an illegal seizure of power, with one set of political players seizing control illegally and postponing presidential elections indefinitely, the new leader would emerge in a power struggle analogous to Soviet successions. In this case, support from key institutions and interest groups, particularly the military high command and the officer corps, would be crucial to a successful bid for leadership.

An authoritarian succession scenario, then, would greatly enhance the Defense Ministry's role as a key power broker. How likely is it that the high command would throw its support behind an extremist or ultranationalist political figure? Our review of the military leadership's role over the past five years indicates that a key motive shaping the high command's calculations in this scenario would be its perceptions of the possible impact on Russian stability. In other words, the high command would likely grant its support to that political leader it saw as representing the least divisive alternative.

Similar considerations apply to the military's likely response to another executive-legislative conflict like the one that rocked Moscow in the fall of 1993. The military's reaction and its ability to act in such a scenario will be determined in large part by the presence or absence of large scale violence, or (to put it differently) an unambiguous threat to stability. A threat to a particular political leader, or even a governing regime, will not necessarily result in decisive actions on the part of the military to defend it. The military would likely agree to employ forces only if there were immediate threats to state stability. The high command's decision as to which side to support will likely

be based less on its own political sympathies (which remain largely conservative) than on its assessment as to which side was most likely to be able to restore order.

There is one scenario in which the military may be the prime architect of political change. If there were complete political paralysis at the center, the high command could initiate a seizure of power in order to restore order. Alternately, selected regional military commanders might forge a coalition with like-minded provincial leaders, to seize power with the goal of restoring the centralized state. However, a military-initiated seizure of power is likely only if there were a complete collapse of central authority and military leaders and the officer corps became convinced that only intervention by the Armed Forces could prevent Russia's descent into anarchy.



## NOTES

1. On the democratization process, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); and Georg Sorenson, *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World* (Boulder: Westview, 1993). On the military's role in the democratization process, see Huntington (1991), pp. 198-199, 209, 231-253. See also Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).
2. *Kommunist vooruzhenniy sil*, No. 15 (1989), pp. 3-13.
3. RSFSR declared sovereignty on 14 June 1990. Ukraine issued a sovereignty declaration on 16 July 1990; Belorussia followed suit on 27 July 1990. Uzbekistan was first among the southern tier republics, declaring sovereignty on 20 June 1990, followed by Tadzhikistan (25 August 1990), Kazakhstan (25 October 1990), and Kirgizia (30 October 1990). Moldova declared sovereignty on 23 June 1990, Georgia on 9 March 1990. Armenia declared independence on 23 August 1990.
4. *Pravda*, 4 July 1989; *Pravda*, 5 July 1989, pp. 1-2; *Krasnaya zvezda*, 5 July 1989, pp. 1-3.
5. Leonid Ivashov, *Marshal Yazov. Rokovoy avgust 91-go. Pravda o "Putche"* (Belski: Belti, 1993), p. 40.
6. Interview with D. T. Yazov, "Defending the People's Security," *Pravda*, 23 February 1990, p. 3. He made similar points during a February 1990 radio address, when he denounced the "demagogues" who were labelling the Soviet military as an occupying army and demanded that the people agitating against the draft in the Baltic and Caucasus be "brought to book for anti-

army propaganda." Yazov charged that activists were putting physical pressure on military commissars and people in enlistment offices. "Ostankino Radio Studio on the Air," live phone-in program with Defense Minister Dmitriy Yazov, Moscow Domestic Service, 1100 GMT, 17 February 1990.

7. Interview with USSR Defense Minister Yazov, "Spring Draft," *Izvestiya*, 12 March 1990, p. 3.

8. Interview with Marshal D.T. Yazov, "Responsibility for the Motherland's Fate," *Pravda*, 27 June 1990, p. 5.

9. Ivashov, p. 40.

10. See, for example, a summary of Yazov's remarks at a meeting with military servicemen who were also legislators at various levels, reported in *Krasnaya zvezda*, 6 November 1990, p. 1. See also interview with Army General M. Moiseyev, Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, "You Cannot Remake the Army in a Hurry," *Izvestiya*, 23 December 1990, p. 5 and interview with Yazov on "Vremya," Moscow Television Service, 1900 GMT 24 Nov 1990.

11. Ivashov, pp. 53-58.

12. "With Hope and Belief: Appeal to Comrade M.S. Gorbachev," *Sovetskaya rossiya*, 22 December 1990, p. 1.

13. Moscow Television Service, 2057 GMT, 24 December 1990.

14. The first draft of the treaty was presented to the USSR Supreme Soviet on 23 November 1990. The USSR Supreme Soviet approved it on 3 December. It was submitted to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in mid-December. "Draft Union Treaty," *Pravda*, 24 November 1990, p. 3.

15. Six republics boycotted the referendum. Some countered with their own independence polls that dramatized overwhelming popular support for complete disengagement from the union. Moscow's halfhearted attempts to bully nonparticipants into holding the union poll only increased political tensions. Several of the nine republics that did vote, including Russia and Ukraine, added questions designed to demonstrate public backing for republic autonomy.

16. Dmitriy Yazov, "With Your Yes Vote, You Vote For Renewed Union," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 March 1991, p. 1.

17. "Report by USSR Referendum Central Commission. On Results of 17 March 1991 USSR Referendum," *Pravda*, 27 March 1991, pp. 1-2.

18. TASS, 20 April 1991.

19. "Things are Heating Up All the Time," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 20 June 1991, p. 2; Interview with Viktor Alksnis, "Gorbachev's Concepts Have Led Us into Anarchy and Chaos," *Der Morgan*, 6 May 1991.

20. TASS, 11 April. See also "The Army Will Play First Fiddle," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 14 March 1991, p. 3; and *Moscow News*, No. 6, 10-17 February 1991, p. 7.

21. In a 21 June 1991 interview, Yazov asserted that Alksnis "does not represent the Soviet Army." See *Lidove Noviny*, 24 June 1991, pp. 1,3.

22. Interview with Deputy Defense Minister Valentin Varennikov, Moscow All-Union Radio Mayak Network, 1200 GMT, 23 March 1991.

23. The letter was also signed by hardliner Prokhanov and future coup conspirator Starodubtsev. "A Word to the People," *Sovetskaya rossiya*, 23 July 1991, p. 1. See also Interview with Aleksandr Yakovlev in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, No. 34, 28 August 1991, p. 2. After the failure of the coup, Gromov claimed that he "had no objections in principle" to the idea of an appeal, but had not read the text of it. He saw it, he insisted, only after it was published. Gromov also claimed to have been on vacation on 19 August, when the state of emergency was declared. See *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 28 August 1991, p. 2.

24. E. Ivanov, "Who Will Be President?" *Pravda*, 20 May 1991, p. 2.

25. V. Stepankov and Ye. Lisov, *Kremlyovskiy zagovor. Versiya sledsviya* (Moscow: Ogonek, 1992), pp. 92-93.

26. Transcript from the 22 August 1991 interrogation of Yazov, published in *Izvestiya*, 11 October 1991, p. 7. The role of Yazov's concern over what he saw as the impending breakup of the union in his decision to join the coup conspiracy was also stressed by his Defense Ministry colleagues. (See A. Krayniy, "How and Why Did Marshal Yazov End Up As A Plotter?" *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 27 August 1991, p. 3.) An interesting assessment of Yazov's gradual alienation from Gorbachev is provided by Stepankov's account of the coup. Stepankov depicts Yazov as a "marshal who became a toy in the hands of politicians." According to this account, Yazov (like many other military officers) had great hopes for Gorbachev and perestroika from 1985 to 1988. However, Yazov gradually came to see Gorbachev as a threat to the integrity of the state. The November 1990 meeting between Gorbachev and military deputies was a turning point in Gorbachev's relations with the officer corps and with Yazov. Stepankov portrays Yazov's 27 November 1990 television address as a key to Yazov's position. In the address, Yazov pointed to the actions of republics that threatened the defense capability of the country, in particular their

demands to withdraw Soviet troops. The army, Yazov promised, would remain wherever needed to fulfill its main function: the defense of the state and ensuring of state security. See Stepankov and Lisov, , pp. 25-29.

27. After the coup, the Defense Ministry Collegium issued a statement denying that the Collegium had approved Yazov's membership on the State Committee for the State of Emergency. Members of the Collegium, it claimed, were not even informed of Yazov's decision. Furthermore, according to the MOD Collegium, "The actions of the military-political leadership of the Army and Navy . . . did not go beyond the law." "At the USSR Defense Ministry Collegium," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 23 August 1991, p. 3.

28. Varennikov was among those who detained Gorbachev at Foros. His motivations appeared to mirror those of Yazov, since he justified his actions to Gorbachev by arguing that the draft union treaty that Gorbachev was slated to sign upon his return to Moscow contradicted the results of the March referendum. He also complained that Gorbachev was allowing separatists and extremists forces to act against the country. Stepankov and Lisov, p. 14.

The chief of staff of the Air Defense Forces, Colonel General Maltsev, was another alleged participant in the detention of Gorbachev. See "A Chronicle of the Coup and the Resistance," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 23 August 1991, p. 7.

Presidential advisor Marshal Akhromeyev was also among those who joined the coup conspiracy. He committed suicide after the coup failed. His suicide note indicated that, beginning in 1990, he became convinced that the country was being ruined. Stepankov and Lisov, pp. 236-243.

29. Deposition of Pavel Grachev on 25 September 1991 in "Why the Thunder Did Not Rumble," *Moskovskiy novosti*, No. 29, 17-24 July 1994, p. 8. Grachev's testimony confirms earlier assertions by coup conspirator Kryuchkov and others that

Grachev was involved in coup planning. On Kryuchkov's testimony, see Moscow Interfax, 30 November 1993. See also I. Kadulin, "The Lubyanka Theater," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 21 December 1991, p. 3. According to foreign intelligence agent Aleksey Yegorov, the list drawn up by Grachev and others at the 16 August meeting became the basis for the introduction of a state of emergency by the State Committee for the State of Emergency. (*Komsomolskaya pravda*, 29 August 1992, p. 2.)

30. Among those later charged by journalists or participants with supporting the coup was the commander of the Volga-Urals Military District Colonel General Makashov. (*Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 27 August 1991, p. 1; *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 27 August 1991, p. 1; and *Izvestiya*, 3 September 1991, p. 8.) According to General Konstantin Kobets, who was head of Russia's State Defense Committee and one of the White House defenders, the Strategic Rocket Forces Commander "did not let us down," but his chief of staff Major General Chibisov "literally bellowed for joy" that the democrats were about to be crushed. Kobets also charged that the SRF political organs actively supported the coup conspirators. (Interview with Konstantin Kobets in *Moskovskiy novosti*, No. 35, 1991, p. 4.) Commander of the Air Defense Forces Army General Tretyak was among those who allegedly gave the coup conspirators his active support. Although Far Eastern Military District Commander Novozhilov reportedly withheld support, several generals in the district's political apparatus strongly supported the coup. (*Izvestiya*, 27 August 1991, p. 3.) The commission appointed by the USSR Supreme Soviet to investigate the coup events charged that the command of the Transcaucasus Military District had worked with the Georgian Internal Affairs Ministry to support the efforts of the emergency committee. (Interfax, 27 December 1992.) Lithuanian sources charge that the chief of the Baltic Military District actively supported the coup in Lithuania. (See Radio Vilnius, 2130 GMT, 5 September 1991 and *Ekho litvy*, 1 September 1991, pp. 1-2.)

31. Interview with Leningrad Mayor A. Sobchak in *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 34, August 1991, p. 6.
32. *Pravda*, 20 August 1991, p. 3; *Sovetskaya rossiya*, 20 August 1991, p. 2; and Moscow TASS, 19 August 1991.
33. Under pressure from Mayor Sobchak, Samsonov ordered troops to halt outside the city. Sobchak address on 21 August 1991; and *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 23 August 1991, p. 6. For findings of a city council commission investigating the coup, see Interfax, 6 September 1991. See also Aleksandr Nevzorov, "August 1991," *Zavtra*, No. 28 (33), July 1994, p. 3.
34. According to Air Force Colonel V.S. Smirnov, a USSR people's deputy, "All the commands were transmitted without a hitch from top to bottom. And I think that no one should have any illusions—the army would have obeyed any orders it was given." "Serving the Fatherland," 2230 GMT, 31 August 1991.
35. Describing the first meeting at the Defense Ministry (apparently in the early morning hours of 18 August), Shaposhnikov later conceded that he didn't feel there was anyone there with whom he could safely share his feelings of unease. Later, he spoke with some members of the Defense Ministry Collegium. "From these conversations, it became clear that I would have difficulty in finding allies." (Interview with Shaposhnikov, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 27 August 1991, p. 3.) On the absence of high command refusal to comply with GKChP orders, see also Stepankov and Lisov, p. 20.
36. Stepankov and Lisov, pp. 108 - 109. Most of the military leaders who attended the morning meeting on 19 August appeared to have been unaware of the plan to declare an emergency. When a *Komsomolskaya pravda* reporter spoke with Colonel General N. Kalinin, commander of the Moscow Military District, that day, Kalinin acknowledged that troops had advanced into the city. Acting Commander of the Ground Forces Colonel

General Mikhail Kolesnikov said that "the Defense Minister's report came as a surprise to me, but the troops are undoubtedly ready to perform the tasks assigned to them." (Andrey Krayniy, "Military Provincial Chronicle," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 22 August 1991, p. 1.) Speaking of the morning meeting on 19 August, Shaposhnikov recalled that everyone was in a state of shock and even Yazov was not enthusiastic. Shaposhnikov justified the lack of response from other Collegium members by claiming that Yazov did not allow questions to be asked. "And, in any case, to be honest, nobody showed any wish to do so." (Shaposhnikov interview in *Le Monde*, 13 September 1991, p. 8.)

37. Ibid.

38. Stepankov and Lisov, p. 160.

39. Deposition of Pavel Grachev, 25 September 1991, in "Why the Thunder Did Not Rumble," *Moskovskiye novosti*, No. 29, 17-24 July 1994, p. 8.

40. Deposition of Boris Gromov, 25 September 1991, in "Why the Thunder Did Not Rumble," *Moskovskiye novosti*, No. 29, 17-24 July 1994, p. 8.

41. For instance, the chief of staff of the Moscow Military District (Lt Gen Leonid Zolotov) reportedly told an *Izvestiya* correspondent on the morning of 20 August that the coup was hopeless and criminal. N. Burbyga, V. Rudnev, and S. Mostovshchikov, "Actors and Roles: How a Coup D'Etat Was Accomplished in the USSR," *Izvestiya*, 23 August 1991, p. 6.

42. There is conflicting evidence on Grachev's role during the coup. According to Shaposhnikov, Grachev was one of the few Defense Ministry leaders who shared his uneasiness with the emergency measures. (Interview with Shaposhnikov on Moscow Television, 2230 GMT 24 August 1991.) Shaposhnikov and



Grachev, according to Shaposhnikov's account, "agreed under threat of death not to carry out any orders that might bring about irreparable actions." (Interview with USSR Defense Minister Shaposhnikov in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 27 August 1991, p. 3.) However, when Shaposhnikov suggested that Grachev order his paratroopers to attack the coup leaders by besieging the Kremlin, Grachev "expressed doubts about the success of such an enterprise." (Interview with Shaposhnikov in *Le Monde*, 13 September 1991, p. 8.) Grachev himself claims that he started having doubts on the morning of 19 August. When Yeltsin got in touch with him at 0630, he promised that he would use his paratroopers to guard the "White House." (Interview with Grachev in *Krasnaya zvezda*, 31 August 1991, p. 3; and Interview with Grachev in *Izvestiya*, 5 September 1991, p. ) Yazov, in an interview nearly three years after the coup, reports that both Grachev and Lebed conducted themselves appropriately (from his viewpoint) during the coup. After Yeltsin called Grachev and asked him to send troops to protect the White House, Grachev who (according to Yazov) could not do this on his own authority, called Yazov and asked for permission to do so. Yazov interview in *Zavtra*, No. 21 (26), June 1994, p. 3.

43. At the Collegium session, Shaposhnikov, chief of the Navy Admiral Chernavin, and head of the Strategic Rocket Forces Army General Maksimov called for troops to be withdrawn from Moscow. Andrey Krayniy, "Military Provincial Chronicle," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 22 August 1991, p. 1.

44. Stepankov and Lisov, pp. 180, 186. For the order adopted by the Defense Ministry Collegium meeting on 0800, 21 August, see *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 27 August 1991, p. 3.

45. Even those who saw the coup as ill-conceived acknowledged that the military complied with orders. For instance, Moscow Military District Chief of Staff Zolotov, responding to a question as to whether officers and servicemen went over to the side of the Russian government, said "Commanders and servicemen

carried out all order of the Minister of Defense to the letter." (*Izvestiya*, 23 August 1991, p. 6.)

46. For instance, then Vice President Rutskoy met with the Major Sergey Yevdokimov, the commander of a tank sub-unit, and talked him into joining the White House defenders. Six of the ten tanks in Yevdokimov's subunit moved to the White House building. Stepankov and Lisov, pp. 152-153.

47. According to Gromov, it was Achalov (one of the most enthusiastic Defense Ministry participants in the coup) who argued most forcefully that the projected operation could not be carried out. Grachev, too, acknowledges Achalov's role in convincing Yazov of the risks of storming the White House. See depositions in *Moskovskiye novosti*, No. 29, 17-24 July 1994, p. 8.

48. A poll of urban residents on 24 August asked respondents whether their attitude toward the military had changed recently. 49% said that their was no change and 30% said their attitude had improved; only 12% said that their attitude had worsened. Another poll, this time limited to Moscow residents, asked respondents whether their attitude to the military had changed following the events of 19 August. 50% reported no change; 26% said their attitude to the military had improved; and 12% said that it had worsened. Both polls were done by VTsIOM. (A. Levinson, "Army and Putchsh," *Armiya*, No. 21, November 1991, pp. 49-51.) VTsIOM polls, like most other surveys that attempt to tap public trust or confidence in institutions, consistently have shown that the military is among the most highly trusted institutions, first in the USSR and now in Russia.

49. "Armed Forces Must Be Unified. USSR Defense Minister's News Conference," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 7 September 1991, p. 1. See also the 5 November press conference by Defense Minister Shaposhnikov, "The USSR State Council Says 'Yes' To Unified

Armed Forces," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 7 November 1991, p. 1.

50. Vasiliy Izgarshev, "To Whom to Swear Allegiance," *Pravda*, 16 December 1991, pp. 1-2; Vyacheslav Lukashevich, "The Army Seemingly Has to Choose Again," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 12 December 1991, p. 1; and V. Litovkin, "The Supreme Commander in Chief Meets with the Armed Forces Leadership," *Izvestiya*, 12 December 1991, p. 1.

51. Nikolay Andreyev, "Whom Will the Army Follow?" *Izvestiya*, 11 December 1991, p. 3.

52. D. Makarov, "The Military Between Yesterday and Today," *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 44, November 1993, pp. 8-9.

53. Interview with General Pyankov, "Major Maneuvers in a Mine Field," *Trud*, 9 January 1992, p. 4. See also V. Pasyakin, "The Division of the Navy Means Its Destruction," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 10 January 1992, p. 1; *Izvestiya*, 4 January 1992, p. 1, and 7 January 1992, p. 1.

54. An early February poll taken in all branches of the Armed Forces indicated that 80% favored a unified military doctrine. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 14 February 1992, p. 1.

55. Aleksandr Putko, "Sentiments in the Army Worry the Military Itself," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 February 1992, p. 2. For more detailed breakdown of results by service tenure, see Elena Koneva, "Real Support for Army Reform," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 February 1992, p. 2.

56. P. Zalesskiy, "What Officers Demand Today," *Armiya*, No. 15, August 1992, pp. 12-13. See also V. Mukhin, "The Year After the Putsch: How Does the Army Live?" *Armiya*, No. 18, September 1992, pp. 47-49.

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57. "On Organizational Measures to Create the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of the Russian Federation," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 9 May 1992, pp. 1,2.

58. A convenient review of provincial autonomy moves before the August 1991 coup is found in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 18 May 1991, pp. 4-5.

59. Aleksandr Kholod, "Tatarstan Recalls its Citizens from Trouble Spots," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 11 March 1993, p. 1; and Andrey Bondarenko, "Tatarstan Supreme Soviet Has Adopted Resolution Contradicting Russian President's Edict; It Also Contradicts Federal Legislation," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 3 December 1993, p. 3.

60. Interfax, 1016 GMT, 23 March 1992; and Postfactum, 1804 GMT, 30 March 1992.

61. *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 15 January 1993, p. 1.

62. TASS International Service, 1525 GMT, 9 February 1992; and Radio Rossii Network, 1700 GMT, 19 December 1992.

63. On Chechnya's military forces, see N. Astashkin, "D. Dudayev's Military Program," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 November 1991, p. 1; N. Astashkin, "Military Camp Handed to National Guard," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 15 January 1992, p. 3; and Aleksandr Aleshkin, "Chechen Air Fleet," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 23 January 1992, p. 3.

64. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 8 July 1993, p. 1. See also Aleksandr Golts, "The Rake is the Chief Tool of Knowledge in Russia," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 10 July 1993, p. 2; and Ivan Ivanyuk, "The More Sovereign the Regions Become, the Worse Servicemen's Lives There Are," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 26 October 1993, p. 1.

65. According to the 1989 census, ethnic Russians constituted 119.9 million (81.5%) of the Russian Federation's 147 million populace. Two other Slavic nationalities (Ukrainians and Belorussians) constituted 3% and 1% respectively. Goskomstat Rossii. *Rossiyskaya federatsiya v tsifrakh*. 1992. (Moscow: Respublikanskiy Informatsionno-izdatelskiy Tsentr, 1992), pp. 47-51.

66. This version of events leading up to the 21 September decree dissolving the old parliament is drawn largely from the second volume of Yeltsin's memoirs: Boris Yeltsin, *Zapiski prezidenta* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Ogonyek, 1994), pp. 349-367.

67. Yeltsin's account of the leadup to the fall crisis described a 12 September meeting in Staroye Ogarevo, during which he informed Grachev, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, then Security Minister Golushkov, and Internal Minister Yerin about the draft decree dissolving parliament. According to Yeltsin, all four ministers approved the draft, as did Prime Minister Chernomyrdin on the following day when he returned from a trip to the United States. Associated Press Worldstream, 9 April 1994.

68. D. Makarov, "The Military Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 44, November 1993, pp. 8-9.

69. Fond Obshchestvennoye Mneniye. *V pole zreniye*, No. 41, October 1993, pp. 2-4.

70. Yeltsin's description of these events is found in *Zapiski*, pp. 378-387.

71. Other accounts present a slightly different picture—one in which Yeltsin made repeated telephone calls for help to Grachev, who responded evasively, claiming, "The army is above politics." See Vasilii Kononenko, *Izvestiya*, 5 October 1993, p. 2. See also interview with Yeltsin ally Poltoranin, 11 October 1993 and

*Izvestiya*, 12 October 1993, p. 4.

72. *Izvestiya*, 13 October 1993, p. 8.

73. Yeltsin, *Zapiski*, p. 381, 383. Yeltsin's memoirs contain the most damaging indictment of military inaction in the face of rioting. In earlier accounts of the military's role, Yeltsin conceded that "there were indeed problems" in terms of the army's participation in resolving the conflict: "I had to be 100 percent sure that this order would be carried out." Yeltsin interview to *Stern* magazine, reprinted in *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 4 November 1993, pp. 1,4. See also the account of the events of 3/4 October provided by Yeltsin aid General Dmitriy Volkogonov in Reuters, October 18, 1993.

74. Yeltsin, *Zapiski*, pp. 383-384.

75. Yeltsin, *Zapiski*, p. 385.

76. Yeltsin's account indicates that the President did, in fact, have his aide prepare a written directive to Grachev authorizing him to command a military operation to seize the White House. Yeltsin, *Zapiski*, p. 386.

77. After the 3/4 October events, Grachev indignantly denied all reports that he or Defense Ministry forces were reluctant to come to Yeltsin's aid. See Grachev interview in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 8 October 1993. First Deputy Defense Minister Andrey Kokoshin, in response to sharp questioning from interviewer Yegor Yakovlev, justified Grachev's reluctance by saying that it was a difficult moment for the Defense Minister, who was trying to minimize bloodshed. *Obshchaya gazeta*, No. 26 (51), 1-7 July 1994, p. 4.

78. Irina Savveyeyeva, "Where Was the Army? It Was Ascertaining Who the People Were Behind," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 5 October 1993, p. 3.

79. Grachev interview in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 8 October 1993, p. 2. Gromov has tried to distance himself publicly from the MOD's involvement in the White House attack: "I was not a participant in the October crisis." Interview with B. Gromov in *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 8, February 1994, pp. 1,5.

80. Most surveys of military servicemen or military officers in 1992 and 1993 found that Rutskoy was more popular than Yeltsin and tended to score best among servicemen. See for instance, V. Mukhin, "A Year after the Putsch: How Does the Army Live?" *Armiya*, No. 18, September 1992, pp. 47-49; Aleksey Levinson, "Leave Everything As It Is," *Izvestiya*, 2 December 1993, p. 2; "Aleksandr Rutskoy—Most Popular Russian Politician," Interfax, 1439 GMT, 13 October 1992.

81. A. V. Buzgalin and A.I. Kolganov, *Krovavyy oktyabr v moskve. Khronika, svidetelstva, analiz sobytiy. 21 sentyabrya—4 oktyabrya 1991 goda.* (Moscow, 1993), pp. 29-30, 62.

82. Interview with Grachev in *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, 8 October 1993.

83. *Izvestiya*, 7 October 1993.

84. "Yeltsin Army Aide Says Officials Wavered in Coup," Reuters, 18 October 1993; and "Moscow Emergency Ends as General Admits Close Shave," The Press Association Limited, Press Association Newsfill, 18 October 1993.

85. See, for instance, interview with Lt Gen Leonid Ivashov, "Black October: Facts and Fabrications," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 20 October 1993, p. 2.

86. A survey of urban residents a month after the attack on the White House asked whether respondents were satisfied or dissatisfied with Yeltsin's activities during the intervening month. Only a quarter (mainly entrepreneurs) were satisfied. Fond Obshchestvennoye Mneniye. *V pole zreniye*, No. 48, November 1993, pp. 2-4.

87. In response to the question, "who possesses the real power in Russia today?" 23% of urban residents named the mafia; 22% said nobody; and 19% found it difficult to answer. Only 14% named President Yeltsin. Fond Obshchestvenniy Mneniye, "Viewpoint," Interfax, 7 April 1994.

88. In February 1994, 46% in a survey of urban residents said it was time for Yeltsin to step down and 20% were undecided; only 34% wanted him to stay on. In September 1993, by contrast, only 30% said it was time for Yeltsin to step down, while 41% said he should stay on. Fond Obshchestvenniy Mneniye, "Viewpoint," 17 March 1994.

89. Grachev's remarks were made in an address to cultural workers and reported in Interfax, 1 April 1994. See also the Novosti newscast, 1700 GMT, 2 April 1994.

90. *Washington Post*, 22 October 1993, pp. A1, A28.

91. Local electoral commission chiefs from the Far East reported that the LDP was particularly popular among servicemen in the Far Eastern and Baykal military districts. (Moscow Interfax, 13 Dec 93) However, voters in districts heavily populated by personnel from the Black Sea Fleet appeared to endorse the LDP, but by a smaller margin than the rest of the country; only 19% of those voters (vice nearly 1/4 in the country as a whole) voted for the LDP on the party lists. (Moscow Interfax, 13 Dec 93) In the military port of Kaliningrad, 29% endorsed the LDP (Paris AFP, 13 Dec 93). Up to 43.3% of the servicemen stationed in Tajikistan voted for the LDP; an additional 11.4% endorsed the



CP. (Moscow, Interfax, 13 Dec 93) The LDP also led among Russian servicemen stationed in Georgia. (Moscow Mayak Radio Network, 15 Dec 93). 40% of voters in Turkmenistan, where the majority of voters were officers and family members, supported the LDP (Moscow, Interfax, 14 Dec 93) Nearly one third of the voters in some Moscow region garrisons supported Zhirinovskiy (Aleksandr Mnatsakyan, "The Success of Political Toadyism, *Rossiya*, No. 51, 15-21 Dec 93, p. 1.)

92. Yeltsin press conference, 22 Dec 93, Moscow Ostankino Television. Yeltsin was responding to a question from an Australian journalist. Reports about military voting preferences were shrilly denied by the Defense Ministry, which argued that most servicemen voted in open voting stations. ("The Army and the Elections," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 17 Dec 93, p.1.) At the same time, however, the Defense Ministry claims that 74% of servicemen endorsed the Constitution—a claim that seems questionable if the Ministry's position that the military vote is buried in civilian voting stations is true. (Pavel Felgengauer, "The Army Voted no Worse and No better than the People," *Segodnya*, 15 Dec 93, p.1.

93. Round Table Interview with FCS Director Sergey Stepashin in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, No. 24, 15 June 1994, pp. 1.

94. Albert Khrapovich, "Dangerous Symptoms Against a Background of Inactivity of Power," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 June 1994, p. 2.

95. Colonels A. Nikolayev and P. Vladimirov, "Presidential Edict Gives Another 83 Men Strips on Their Trousers. But What is the Opinion of Ordinary Officers?" *Novaya yezhednevnyaya gazeta*, 8 July 94, pp. 1-2.

96. Itar-TASS, 23 Dec 93.

97. See, for instance, Oleg Savelyev, "Another Election on the Way," *Moskovskaya pravda*, 8 Feb 94, p. 1.

98. A. Oslon and Ye. Petrenko, *Parlamentskiye vybory i oprosy obshchestvennogo mneniye v rossii vo vtoroy polovine 1993 goda*. Moscow, 1994.

99. Public Opinion Foundation. Interfax Viewpoint Report, 10 February 1994.

100. Oleg Savelyev, "Another Election on the Way," *Moskovskaya pravda*, 8 February 1994, p. 1; Oleg Savelyev, "Rating Falls. This Time, On Zhirinovskiy," *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, 12 February 1994, p. 1; Interfax Viewpoint Report, No. 4, January 1994; Oleg Savelyev, "Russians on the State Duma's Initial Performance," *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, 28 January 1994, p. 1; Oleg Savelyev, "Some Like Gaydar, Others Prefer Zhirinovskiy," *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, 29 December 1993, p. 3; Vladimir Shokarev, "Who Voted for the LDPR," *Izvestiya*, 30 December 1993, p. 4; Dmitriy Volkov, "The LDP as a Party of the Soviet Working Class," *Segodnya*, 24 December 1993, p. 2.

101. Oslon and Petrenko, op cit.

102. On the military's defense budget campaign, see *Izvestiya*, 12 May 1994; *Segodnya* 11 May 1994; Interfax 19 May 94; Interfax 19 May 94; TASS 23 May 94; NTV 22 May 94, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 June 1994, p. 3; Interfax, 1 June 94.

103. Interview with Lt Gen Lebed, "Aleksandr Lebed: Life Itself Compels Generals to Engage in Politics," *Izvestiya*, 20 July 1994, pp. 1,4.

104. "14th Army Officers Demand Lebed remain Army Commander," Itar Tass, 8 Aug 94; and Russian Officers Threaten Rebellion Over Lebed Dismissal, Paris AFP, 4 Aug 94.

105. Yeltsin Praises General Lebed's Role in Dniester Region, Radio Rossii, 15 August 94.

106. Grachev's comments were recorded in an interview with Moscow NTV, 1500 GMT 26 August 1994.

107. Moscow's abortive attempt to remove Lebed is not the first time Yeltsin and Grachev have been faced by officers unwilling to allow Moscow to decide who is in charge of a particular military command. Similar protests ensued in the summer of 1992 when Moscow tried to remove another controversial regional commander—Admiral Kasatonov—from the Black Sea Fleet. Yeltsin eventually was able to remove Kasatonov (in December 1992), but only after promoting him to first deputy Commander in Chief of the Navy, a post where he continues to enjoy access to the media and speaks out with impunity on the fate of the Black Sea Fleet and Crimea. Another example is the May 1994 firing of Admiral Gurinov, commander of the Pacific Fleet, who was removed for negligence after an ammunition dump under his command exploded. A few days later, the Pacific Fleet officers directed an appeal to Yeltsin, asking him to reconsider Gurinov's removal. Although Moscow refused in this case to back down from its decision to fire Gurinov, none of the officers who protested his dismissal appear to have been punished.

108. "Former Commander Varennikov Acquitted of Treason," ITAR-Tass World Service, 11 Aug 94. See also "Gorbachev: Varennikov Verdict Bad for Russia, Democracy," Interfax, 12 August 1994; "Filatov Condemns Court Ruling," Interfax, 12 August 1994; "Varennikov To Reveal Little Known Fact of Aug 91 Events, Ostankino Television Network," 12 Aug 94; and

"1991 Coup Organizer Says Gorbachev Should Face Trial,"  
ITAR-Tass, 9 Aug 94.

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